

Future Leaders Fellowships Round 10 Applicant Support Webinar

25 September 2025 | 14:00 – 15:00 BST | Online

Webinar will begin shortly
This session will be recorded



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Future Leaders Fellowships Round 10 Applicant Support Webinar

25 September 2025 | 14:00 – 15:00 BST | Online



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Welcome – FLF Business Applicant Support Webinar

**Dr Susie
Ranford**

Innovate UK Business
Connect

Cherish Vines

Innovate UK FLF
Programme Co-ordinator

Jo Byron

Innovate UK Business
Connect Events Manager

If you have any problems related to accessing today's webinar Jo.Byron@iukbc.org.uk

If you have queries following today's webinar FLFBusinessTeam@ukri.org

Please use the chat to ask questions during the webinar.



**Innovate
UK**

**Business
Connect**



Your Application Must Shine

UKRI is looking for the UK's **Top 10** Future
Leaders of Research and Innovation in Business



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



The Problem

Many previous business FLF applications have been **rejected** due to:

- Poor writing
- Lack of understanding of the process
- Failure to recognise the importance of key application sections



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Agenda

- ~~Good~~ Great FLF Grant Writing
- Lessons Learnt: Key Failure Points
- Common Questions and Misunderstandings
- Q&A



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Health Warning!

- IUK Business Connect are **not** assessors.
- Our guidance is opinion: based on assessor feedback and conversations with previous applicants
- We work closely with UKRI but they have not been asked to approve this webinar's content
- This is **not** a cookie cutter application guide
- Marks are not removed for failing to comply with our suggestions!
- Interpret, personalise and create your own unique FLF application



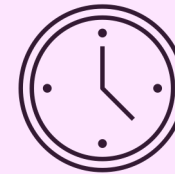
Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Is this You?

- Early career innovators and researchers
- Ambitious research and innovation to tackle difficult and novel challenges
- Excellence in innovation, across interdisciplinary boundaries and sectors
- Next wave of research and innovation leaders
- Working with a host organisation a Future Leaders Fellow will receive at least four years of funding to pursue an ambitious programme of innovation
- Previously funded projects' grant requests have been between £100k and £3m (£1.5m)

Weigh up the
opportunity cost



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

~~Good~~ Great Grant Writing

Drawing out what an exceptional application should look like with reference to the assessor guides



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance

- Download from <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/2058/download/22912>
- Use for self assessment
- Use for peer assessment

Question	Scoring	Note
1 – 9	Not scored	First impressions. Sets the tone for the assessor.
10 – 20	Scored	Aim for 9 – 10 in every question



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Overarching Framework



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Why You? **Your** Vision, Approach and Capacity

- Why are **you** fantastic? *How can you support this statement with evidence?*
- The Future Leader of ... ? *Demonstrate your independence and ambition.*
- Future-proof your idea. *Trends in technology, science and platforms change quickly.*
- Aim for 5 to 10+ years vision. *The vision should not end with the funding.*



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Vision	Good motivation. Excellent quality and is timely. Good awareness of the nearest innovation and some understanding of limitations and any similar innovations. Wider factors identified. Potential benefits well defined.	Compelling motivation. Excellent quality and is timely. Clear understanding of any similar innovation identified and its current limitations. Wider factors are clearly identified. Potential benefits are significant and well defined.
Approach and Innovation	Addresses the need or challenge. Main innovations are highlighted. Evidence of innovation and freedom to operate. Demonstrable differentiation from competitors.	Addresses the need, challenge or opportunity . Main innovations are identified. Clear evidence of differentiation. Significantly innovative and will make a substantial contribution to the field. Solid evidence of the level of innovation and freedom to operate.



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Capability	Applicant has relevant experience and is likely to succeed as a future leader. Skills are relevant to the program of work. Good evidence of contributing to a positive research environment, team working or leadership skills.	Applicant is very well placed to carry out the project and exploit the results. Highly relevant experience that make them an excellent candidate to succeed as a future leader. Skills are very well suited to the program of work. Strong evidence of contributing to a positive research environment and has clearly demonstrated team working or leadership skills.



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Host Organisation

- **Why is your host the best location?** *How can you evidence this statement?*
 - ✓ *Commitment – financial, resources, mentoring & support*
 - ✓ *Advantages – environment, access to data/insights, collaborations, partnerships and links*
- **How does your vision align with your host's strategy?** *Consider goals and timescales.*



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Host organisation	Good commitments to the applicant's career development and innovation delivery. Research environment is well suited , with good strategic relevance. Any additional host organisations are committed .	Strong commitments to the applicant's career development and innovation delivery, which will fully support the applicant. Research environment is very well suited , with strong strategic relevance . Any additional host organisations are fully committed .



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



The Plan - Career Development

- **Reverse engineer your vision.** *Who are you before, and after?*
 - ✓ *What new knowledge and skills will you gain?*
 - ✓ *What actions and activities are needed?*
 - ✓ *What opportunities can you grasp?*
- **Consider development for your team, as well as yourself.**



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Career Development	<p>Articulated their career goals. Set out a good plan to become a future leader in their sector. Opportunities for affecting positive change in the wider community are identified.</p> <p>Good plan for supporting their team and has identified some of skills they will develop. Appropriate mentoring arrangements are in place.</p>	<p>Clearly defined set of career goals. Set out a comprehensive plan to become a future leader in their sector. Opportunities for affecting positive change in the wider community are embedded. Excellent plan for supporting their team and has fully considered how they will develop the necessary skills to deliver their goals. Excellent mentoring arrangements are in place.</p>

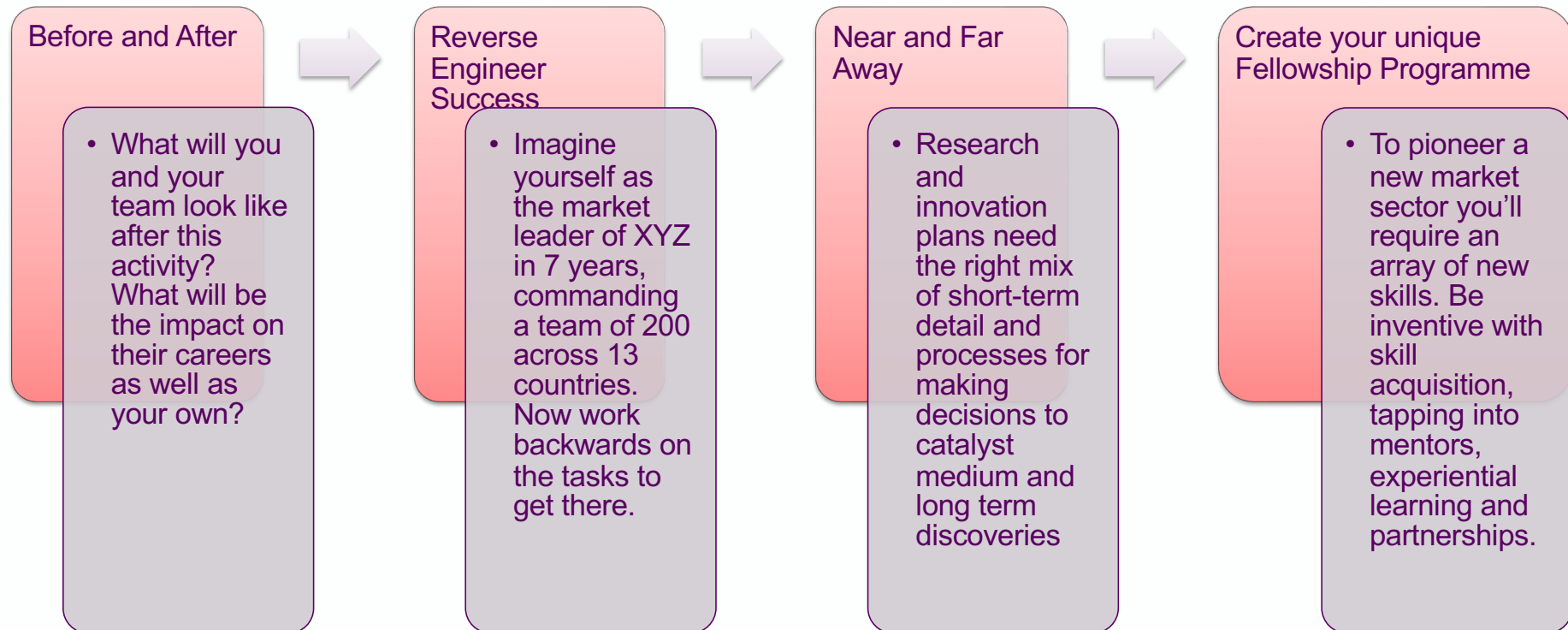


Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

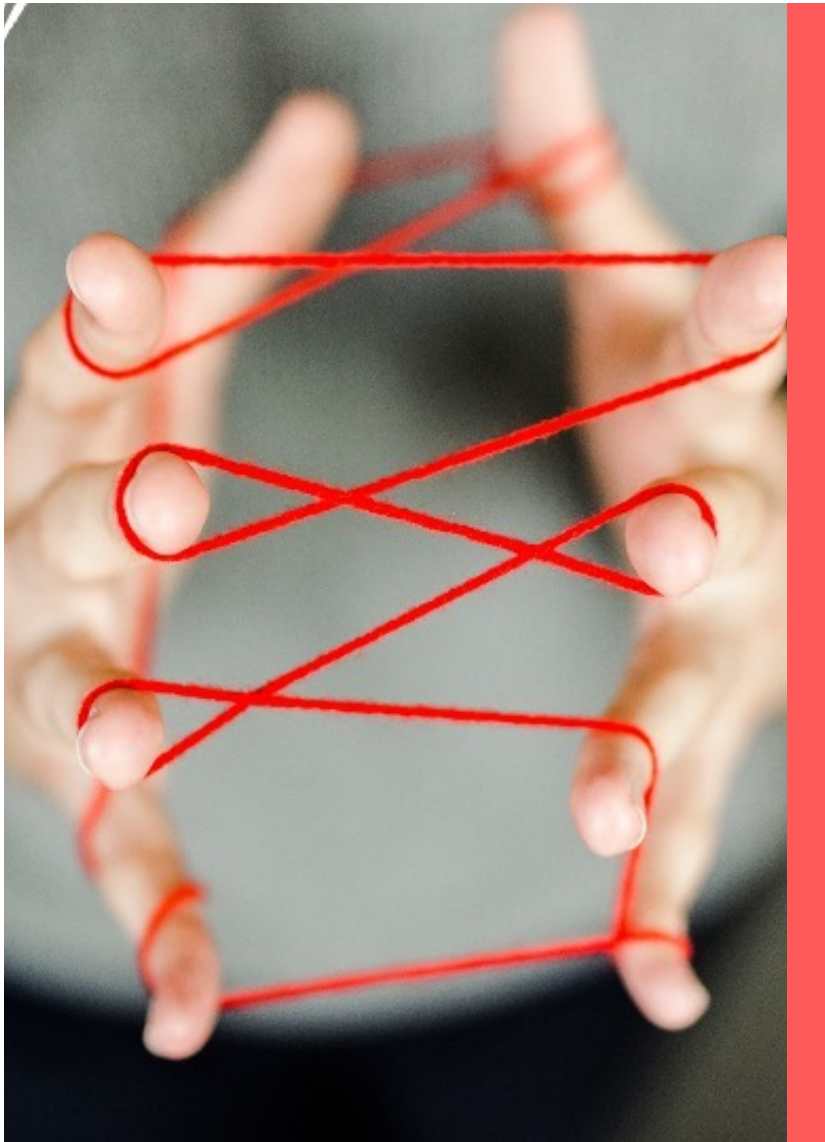
Tips for Visionary Planning

Applicants often struggle with this one!



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Linkage Questions – the Thread

- Where will the assessor need reassurance?
 - ✓ Robust plan – well thought through, good value, achievable, relevant for proposition
 - ✓ Management of project; risks; costs; data
 - ✓ Ethics
 - ✓ Added value from public funding (time, scale)



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Ethics	Good awareness of ethical implications. Possible negative impacts are partially mitigated.	Ethical implications are fully addressed and understood. Possible negative impacts are fully mitigated.
Project Management	Work packages are outlined. Approach to project management is stated. Plan seems appropriate . Links or dependencies are stated.	Work packages are clearly outlined. Approach to project management is fully described. Plan is realistic and efficient . Links or dependencies are identified.
Risks	Key risks and uncertainties are considered with appropriate mitigations. Risk analysis seems realistic .	Key risks and uncertainties are fully considered and mitigated. Critical inputs are identified . Risk analysis is appropriate and professional .
Added Value (from public funding)	Arguments are good and justified.	Compelling case.



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Assessment Guidance: ~~Good~~ to Great

Question	Good (Scores 7 – 8)	Great (Scores 9 – 10)
Costs and Value for Money	Costs are appropriate and should be sufficient. Balance of costs and grant between partners, and use of subcontractors, seems reasonable. Good value for money for the organisation and the taxpayer.	Costs are entirely appropriate. The balance of costs and grant between partners, and use of subcontractors, is justified and reasonable. Excellent value for money for the team and the taxpayer.
Data Management and Sharing	The management and sharing of data provided is provided and complies with the UKRI data sharing policy	Fully detailed and complies with the UKRI data sharing policy



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Lessons Learnt

Key weaknesses and failure points drawn from
previous business applications



Level of Research and Innovation

Applicant **should not overstate** claims:
provide **justification/evidence**

Benefits claimed are **not credible**

Research and innovation **excellence unclear**

Timeline for commercialisation **unclear**

Candidate not the technical expert in the
programme of work proposed...others more
experienced ... **difficult to ascertain** when the
leadership opportunities will arise

Need more information on the potential
economic and social benefits

Applicant has **not provided enough
information** around **what makes this study
different and better**

There is **no information provided** about
current developments in the field. The
novelty has **not been explained**

I found the tone, fluency and clarity of the Case
for Support made an **inspiring impression**



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Describing Yourself

Applicant has no **evidence of track record** in research or innovation

Track record of **delivering innovative outputs** in the organisations they have worked in

The applicant has an unusual career trajectory... I view the applicants track record as an **excellent grounding** to launch their transition to full independence

There is already a strong track record of **successful collaboration**

Applicant appears to have the **skills, experience and motivation** to execute this project well

Evidence of undertaking additional training to gain **relevant** expertise

Technical **skills suited** to this project

No assessors mention **lack of PhD**, however more FLFs are awarded to PhDs. You **MUST** compete on tangible research/innovation achievements



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Host Support and Risk Management

Host organisation support *not evidently strong* enough

Lack of discussion/involvement with policy makers at an early stage means the *impact is not evident*

High risk projects are assessed favourably, but ... **framework to deliver** is *not robust*

There needs to be a *much more thorough risk analysis* conducted (along with *clear mitigation* strategies)

There is *strong and well evidenced support from the host business and their peer community* in this application



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Development Plan

Programme of work **vague**

Approach and methods described at a top level and **not in detail**

Training and development **not formulated to a high standard**

The research case is well presented and the supporting explanations of how this will be achieved **very compelling**

Lacked ... commercial courses/programmes later on in the project

Lacked learning opportunities... for the wider team

Further mentor support would add...

Would benefit from other **placements and collaborations** to broaden the applicant's network and their exposure to different environments and different thinking



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Impact of your Fellowship

Could be awarded via ***other grant routes***,
added value of FLF ***not apparent***

Not clear why the FLF was needed to carry
out programme of work and why the business
organisation was not carrying this out
independently – shows ***lack of added value***

It ***could have been clearer*** how FLF funding
will advance objectives and add value in ways
that could not be achieved via other funding
schemes

Costs ***not justified***, seem high for the level of
work

I am confident that this fellowship will have a
transformative effect on the applicant's career



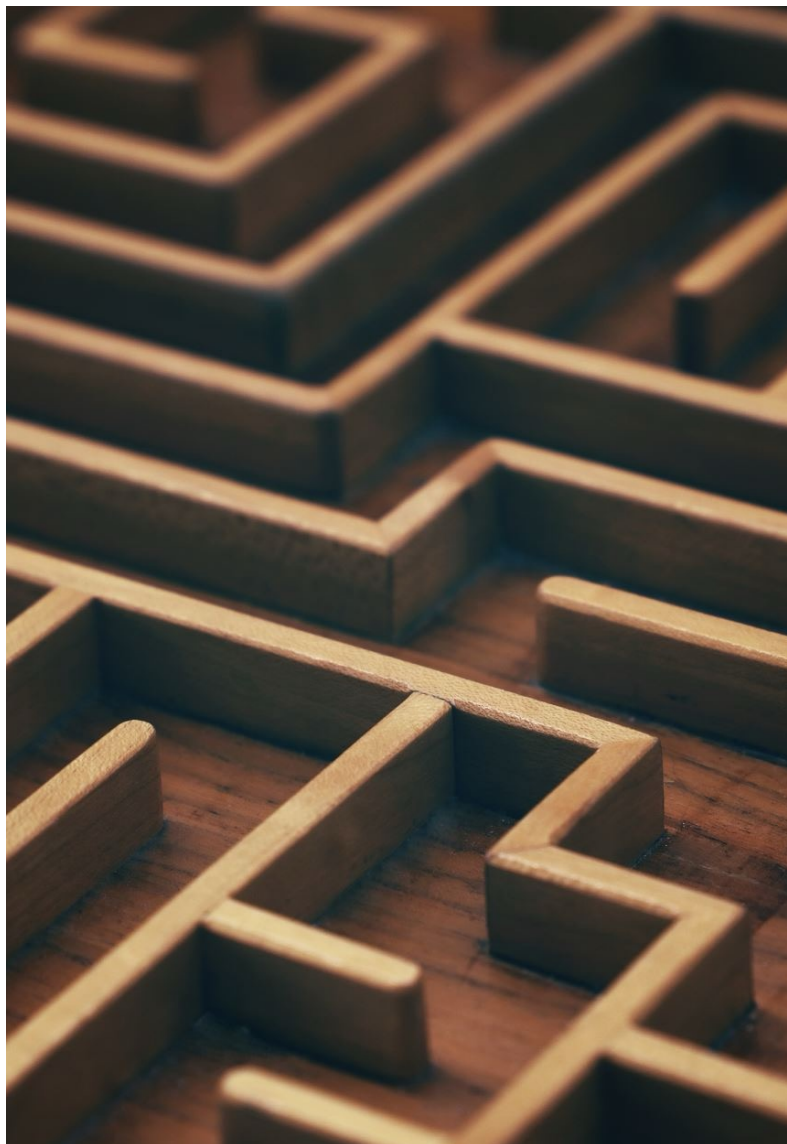
Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Common Questions & Misunderstandings

Common questions and misunderstandings drawn from conversations with previous business applicants





Common Misunderstandings

- **Confusion with typical IUK grant or UKRI award.** Applicants focus on creating a product or service.
- Failure to recognise Research Excellence focus.
- **Solo effort.** Lack of alignment with company.



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Common Questions – Assessment, Scope, Evidence – already covered

- What are the success criteria?
- How do I show research excellence, if I don't have a PhD/publications?
- How big should I make the scope for a 4-year project?

Review ~~Good~~ to Great guidance and Assessor feedback in earlier slides

Interpret, personalise and create your own unique application!

Be specific

Ensure your claims are clearly argued and supported by strong evidence



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Common Questions – Business Size and Funding

- Does the business need to provide matching funds? **Yes**, see [eligibility](#) guidance
- Can I apply from a Micro or SME? **Yes**, see guidance below
- Can I apply as a founder, or from a start-up with no firm investment yet? **Yes**, but see below.

Consider the claims, arguments and evidence you can provide to **reassure** assessors that:

- You are working with the **best possible host**
- The host is **financially sound**. Financial viability and eligibility checks will be carried out by IUK.
- You and your host will have the **capacity to complete** the fellowship
- There is an appropriate balance of **risk vs return**



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Common Questions – Applicants and development

- Can you provide a definition or description of who qualifies as ‘early career’? IUK does **not** publish definitions.
- Are international applicants eligible? **Yes**, but must have the support of an eligible UK host.
- Should any training or development courses included in the application include an offer letter as supporting evidence? Offer letters are **not** required.

Consider the claims, arguments and evidence you can provide to **convince** assessors.



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Common Questions – Academic Partners

- Academic collaboration is **not mandatory**
- Most successful applications do **have** academic collaborators (and often other collaborators)
 - ✓ **Helps demonstrate research excellence**
 - ✓ **Universities can bring relevant FLF expertise in peer review, mock interviews and strengthening application work plans**
- Types of support: facilities, mentoring, training, publication, expertise, complementary skill set, broader user base, links with funders, test solutions, scientific use cases, verify claims, multidisciplinary input...

FLF	KTP	RO
50	21	University College London
31	14	University of Edinburgh
28	4	Imperial College London
24	83	The University of Manchester
24	34	University of Leeds
24	4	University of Oxford
23	2	University of Cambridge
23	5	Kings College London
19	27	University of Warwick
14	43	University of Sheffield
11	63	The University of Nottingham
6	102	Queens University of Belfast
5	60	University of Strathclyde
4	95	The University of Essex
1	44	The University of Huddersfield

FLF & KTP 2018 – 2024 statistics from [GtR](#)



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Q&A





Further Support

- FLF R10 [Competition Guidance](#)
- Competition Briefing [Webinar](#) 26th June 2025
- Business Support [Webinar](#) 30th June 2025
- [Good Application Guide](#) from IUK Business Connect gives general grant application advice
- [FLF Fellows profiles](#)

Contacts

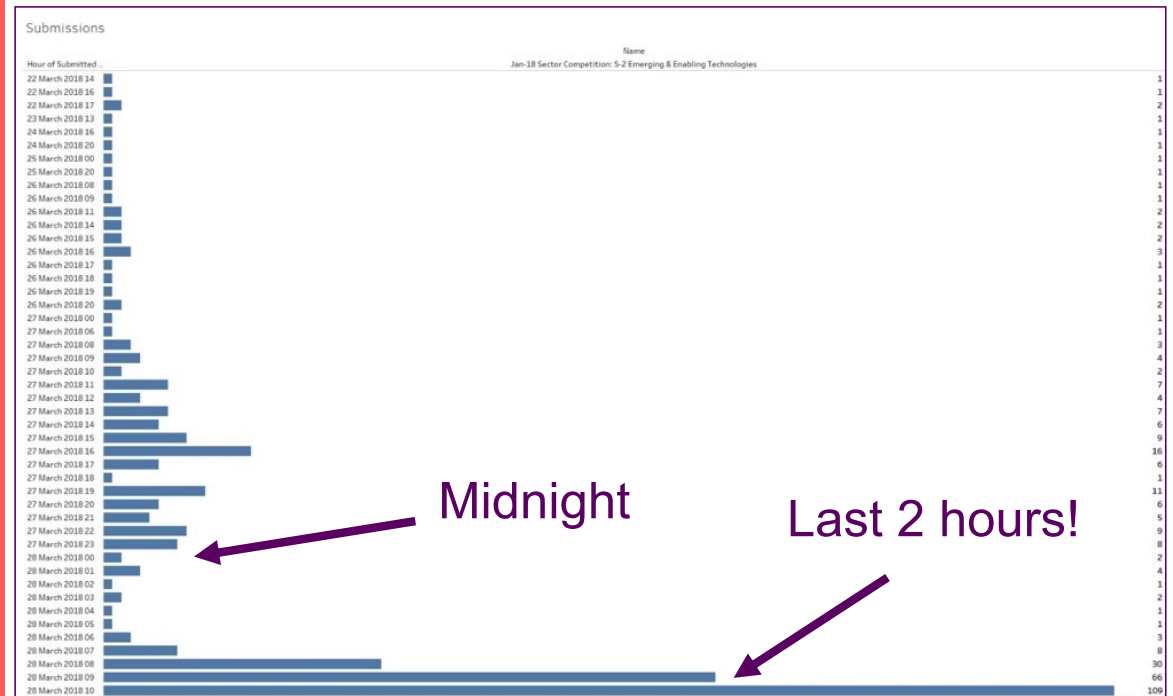
- FLFBusinessTeam@ukri.org IUK FLF team with questions on the FLF business application process and funding rules
- Fellows@ukri.org UKRI FLF team for general enquiries
- Susie.Ranford@iukbc.org.uk for objective feedback and advice on your business FLF application



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Do not be last to submit!



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect

Thank you

Best wishes with your application and career journey
from all of us supporting FLF

Contacts

FLFBusinessTeam@ukri.org IUK FLF team with questions on the FLF business application process and funding rules

Fellows@ukri.org UKRI FLF team for general enquiries

Susie.Ranford@iukbc.org.uk for objective feedback and advice on your business FLF application



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect